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(350) VIETNAM PROTEST
BY MALCOLM BARR

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WASHINGTON, FEB. 1 (AP)-MORE THAN 2,000 CHURCH LEADERS ENDED THEIR THREE-DAY CONFERENCE ON VIETNAM TODAY BY CARRYING TO SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT S. MCNAMARA PERSONALLY THEIR DEMAND FOR A HALT TO THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM.

THE GROUP, CALLED "CLERGY AND LAYMEN CONCERNED ABOUT VIETNAM," EMERGED FROM THE CLOSED SESSION WITH MCNAMARA DESCRIBING HIM AS "SYMPATHETIC" TO THEIR SUGGESTION. BUT IF MCNAMARA MADE ANY PROMISES, THE GROUP DIDN'T MENTION THEM TO NEWSMEN.

"I THINK MR. MCNAMARA SHOULD SPEAK FOR HIMSELF," SAID THE REV. WILLIAM SLOAN COFFIN, CHAPLAIN FROM YALE UNIVERSITY.

EARLIER, THE DELEGATES CHEERED AS THEY HEARD THREE SENATORS CRITICIZE U.S. VIETNAM POLICY IN VIETNAM.

SENS. WAYNE MORSE, D-ORE., ERNEST GRUENING, D-ALASKA, AND SEN. EUGENE J. MCCARTHY, D-MINN., SPOKE TO THEM AT THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE DELEGATES TO THE CONFERENCE INCLUDED CLERGYMEN AND LEADING LAYMEN OF THE PROTESTANT, JEWISH AND ROMAN CATHOLIC FAITHS FROM 45 STATES. ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF THE 2,400 PRESENT WERE MINISTERS, PRIESTS AND RABBIS.

REV. COFFIN, DESCRIBING THE MEETING WITH MCNAMARA, SAID "WE MADE NO BONES ABOUT OUR FEELINGS THAT THE RISKS OF PEACE, GIVEN THE COST OF WAR, ARE SMALL." HE SAID A HALT OF U.S. BOMBING ATTACKS ON NORTH VIETNAM IS THE FIRST STEP THAT "COULD START THE LONG, PAINFULL NEGOTIATED TRUCE."

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THE CHAPLAIN CHARACTERIZED THE INCREASING U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS THAT OF A "PREHISTORIC BEAST BEING SUCKED INTO A TREACHEROUS BOG BENEATH THE PLACID SURFACE OF A POND."

ANOTHER IN THE DELEGATION, THE REV. RICHARD A. NEUHAUS, SAID MCNAMARA WAS ASKED TO TAKE STEPS TO MAKE "CREDIBLE" THE ADMINISTRATION'S STATED WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE SERVICES OF U THANT, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

REV. NEUHAUS IS NEW YORK CITY EDITOR OF AN ECUMENICAL REVIEW CALLED "UNA SANCTA."

MORSE TOLD THE GROUP EARLIER THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SHOULD BE INDEBTED TO THE GROUP "BECAUSE YOU HAVE RAISED THE MORAL ISSUE OF THIS WAR."

GRUENING TOLD THE AUDIENCE: "FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO SAY WE ARE DOWN THERE IN VIETNAM TO DEFEND FREEDOM IS ONE OF THE GREATEST TRAVESTIES OF ALL TIME. THIS WAR HAS TO STOP, AND ANY WAY OUT WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER WHAT WE ARE DOING..."

THE ALASKA DEMOCRAT ASKED CHURCHMEN TO "GO OUT AND TELL THE TRUE FACTS ABOUT VIETNAM TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE."

COMMENTED MCCARTHY: "WE SEEM TO THINK MORALITY STOPS AT THE DOOR OF THE CIA (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY)."

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